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ABSTRACT

This paper briefly describes Chicago's Center for Successful Child Development (CSCD), an institution aiming to prevent school failure among disadvantaged children from low-income families by providing intensive, comprehensive support services to all born since January 1, 1987 to parents residing in the six buildings of the Robert Taylor Homes which comprise the catchment area for the Beethoven Elementary School. Consisting of 28 high-rise buildings housing approximately 20,000 persons, almost all of whom are black and poor, the Robert Taylor Homes are the largest public housing project in the world. Nearly half of the children from the homes are behind grade level by the end of first grade. To address their problems, CSCD provides health services, an infant screening program, a family drop-in center, community information sharing and public education, home visitors, referrals, delivery of child development and parenting education, a high quality infant care center on-site and an expanded and improved system of home day care providers, a Head Start program, the Parents Too Soon program, and a program of collaboration among existing local social support networks. Photocopies of newspaper articles about the center are included. (RH)

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The Center for Successful Child Development

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A Joint Project of:
The Ounce of Prevention Fund
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# THE CENTER FOR SUCCESSFUL CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Gina Barclay McLaughlin & Cecilia Bowie, Ph.D.

For many children, physical, social, or psychological problems experienced in their early years prevent them from succeeding in school. In particular, many low-income children enter school with undetected or untreated health problems and without the benefits of an environment that encourages and enhances language development, social skills, and appropriate emotional behavior. As a result, many children from poor families enter kindergarten unprepared to take advantage of the educational system. These children will almost certainly fail in school. What has not been realized until recently is that if more than one or two such children are in a kindergarten class of 30, the whole class will be shortchanged because teachers cannot cope with the resulting class disruption.

The Center for Successful Child Development (CSCD) is a bold effort to prevent this wide-scale failure by providing intensive, comprehensive support services to all of the children born after January 1, 1987 in the six buildings of the Robert Taylor Homes which comprise the catchment area for the Beethoven Elementary School.

CSCD will provide primary prevention services to all babies born in the Beethoven school district in an effort to avoid conditions which are likely to lead to later, more intractable problems. Intensive work with infants from disadvantaged environments has demonstrated the efficacy of prevention programs. Research demonstration projects such as the Yale Child Welfare Research Program (Provence and Naylor, 1983) and the Clinical Infant Development Program (Press and Greenspan, 1985) have presented clear evidence that, when coordinated comprehensive services are provided to infants, both short-term and long-term developmental gains can be expected. Slaughter (1983), whose research demonstration program was conducted in the Robert Taylor Homes, found that parenting groups became structural vehicles for new social growth for mothers. The sharing of experiences served as a ccatalyst also for adult personality development and change, which in turn permitted the mothers to be more responsive to their infants. Several longitudinal studies of Head Start programs have shown its effectiveness in lessening the need for special education and, in later years, lowering the rate of unemployment and problems of law-breaking among former Head Start participants.



Funded By: Harris Foundation • United States Department of Health and Human Services
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CSCD goes further than previous or existing prevention programs. It is the first effort to target every child entering a specific kindergarten class to ensure that the whole class will be fully prepared for school and thus able to take full advantage of the educational system.

CSCD is funded jointly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Harris Foundation. CSCD is co-sponsored by the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the Chicago Urban League. Both organizations contribute staff and expertise. The Ounce of Prevention Fund is a five-year-old public/private partnership which sponsors more than 40 primary prevention programs around Illinois. The Chicago Urban League is a respected advocacy and social service agency which has provided job training and education services to the black community for more than 70 years.

## THE COMMUNITY

The Robert Taylor Homes are the largest public housing project in the world. The complex is a two-mile stretch of 28 high-rise buildings, virtually cut off from the rest of Chicago by a bordering expressway. Approximately 20,000 people live in Taylor Homes, almost all of whom are black and poor. (Ninety-three percent of the households received public assistance in 1983.) Seventy-five percent of the households are headed by women.

The residents of Taylor Homes face all of the social problems that accompany poverty--high crime rates, high unemployment, high drop-out rates, and extensive health and nutrition problems, including the highest postneonatal mortality rate in Chicago. Nearly half of the children from Taylor Homes are behind grade level by the end of first grade. (One-third of the first graders are placed in a special "pre-second grade" program rather than being promoted.) DuSable High School, which draws its students from this community, has a drop-out rate of almost 60 percent, one of the highest in Chicago.

## SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE CENTER FOR SUCCESSFUL CHILD DEVELOPMENT

In an effort to reverse these troubling trends, the Center for Successful Child Development will offer comprehensive, prevention-oriented services to all children born in the Beethoven Elementary School catchment area between January 1, 1987 and January 1, 1992. Services will begin before the children are born (through prenatal care for their mothers and parent education for mothers and fathers) and continue until they enter kindergarten at age five. Some services will be home based, but many will be delivered on the grounds of Taylor Homes, in space provided by the Chicago Housing Authority to accommodate the facilities and offices of the Center for Successful Child Development.

CSCD service will include:

- Health services, including pre and postnatal care, preventive pediatric care (well baby and child services and screening, assessment and follow-up services), and parent health and nutrition services.

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- An Infant Screening Program, administrated by paraprofessionals who are certified to use the Denver Developmental Screening Program and the Parent Infant Observation Guide (PIOG). The PIOG is a new instrument developed by Ounce of Prevention Fund Staff to gather information on the parent-child relationship and how well the child is functioning in his or her environment. Appropriate follow-up treatment will be provided to those infants who need it.

- A family drop-in center, which will be the physical base for program services and staff. Families will be welcome during day and evening hours for a wide variety of structured and informal services, including parent/child activities, support groups, advocacy, and crisis intervention.

- Community information sharing and public education, coordinated by the Director of Community Linkages from the Chicago Urban League, who will work with a Community Advisory Council, area residents, key community leaders, and local representatives.

- Home Visitors, who will be the chief link between CSCD and infant's family. Through home visits the particular needs of each infant and of his/her family will be linked to appropriate services. A group of home visitors have been recruited from the community and are being trained in the skills required for conducting recruitment and child-find activities, infant screening, and regular home visits to the families of infants in the target community.

- Referrals, for neurological, physiological, and/or psychological assessment, when developmental screening indicates that an infant needs follow-up services. These assessments will be conducted weekly at CSCD by the Division of Child Psychiatry of the University of Chicago and by the Illinois Institute for Developmental Disabilities. Infants, children and families needing intensive treatment will be referred to the appropriate services providers. These will include the medical and therapeutic services at the University of Chicago Hospitals and Clinics, the Dysfunctioning Child Center at Michael Reese, or the Virginia Frank Child Development Center.

- Delivery of child development and parenting education to residents. This effort will include adolescents (as baby-sitters, child care workers, and new and prospective parents) as well as adults (as parents, grandparents, and extended family members). The efforts of the Home Visitors in this domain will be supplemented by informal instruction

to parents by drop-in center staff, formal classes at CSCD and eventually credit courses at the local high school. Particular effort will be made to work with existing and new family day care providers.

- A high quality infant care center onsite and a greatly improved and expanded system of home day care providers. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services has agreed to fund 50 infant/toddler day care slots for the child care center. Several institutions, including the Erikson Institute, are being considered to train residents of the target community interested in providing family day care services in their homes. The Illinois Department of Public Aid will also provide funds to CSCD through its Project Chance Program to assist in training caregivers.

- A Head Start program, under the supervision of the Ounce of Prevention, is already operating in the Robert Taylor Homes. It will be merged under the CSCD umbrella. Head Start personnel will work closely withhome visitors, drop-in center staff and child care providers.

- The Parents Too Soon Program for pregnant and parenting teens, which is already operating in the Robert Taylor Homes community, will merge with CSCD.

- A program of collaboration among existing local social support networks to strengthen and expand child and family services. Several of these services are already being operated in the community by the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the Chicago Urban League. The Ounce of Prevention Fund administers a comprehensive adolescent health clinic at DuSable High School. Provident Medical Center, which has a long history of providing medical services to this community, will coordinate many activities with CSCD. The Division of Child Psychiatry of the University of Chicago, which operates a therapeutic program for high risk mothers and infants at a location two miles away, will provide services onsite at CSCD in the first year of operation. CSCD also will work with a local consortium of early intervention service providers. Through this group, the Illinois Institute for Developmental Disabilities coordinates the identification, referral, case management and program development efforts within the South and Southwest areas of Chicago.

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14 Section 1 Tuesday, September 2, 1986

# Beethoven's '92 class—a new hope

Kindergartners entering Beethoven School from Robert Taylor Homes in the fall of 1992 should be something special. If the theories on child development are right, if a hopeful new project works as expected, these youngsters should be bright, healthy, able to succeed in class and on the way to escaping from the trap of chronic inner-city poverty.

The innovative new project—funded by an unusual mix of federal, state and private foundation money—aims to conquer a whole range of urban poverty problems that begins to affect children even before birth and often channels them inescapably into failure in school and after. It is an attempt to break the chains of poverty and welfare dependency at the most logical and potentially successful point.

The 120 to 150 children who will be Beethoven kindergartners in 1992 are already being identified, as long before their birth as possible. Their mothers, residents of the six buildings in the Robert Taylor public housing project that make up the Beethoven attendance area, will be provided with good prenatal care and with health and parent education. (Lack of prenatal care is often related to low birth weight and to learning problems.)

After these 1992 kindergartners are born, home visitors, a social worker and specialists in infant development will help their parents give them a mentally stimulating environment. (Adequate mental nourishment during a child's earliest years is essential to optimal brain development; lack of it can permanently lower IQ and increase chances of school failure.)

There will be a drop-in center where parents can go with their offspring for a wide range of supportive services and for help with early learning, child rearing, nutrition and health care—and for help in using other community programs. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services will provide infant and toddler day care for families that want it. (Studies show that children who handle 1st grade competently can be identified as competent by age 3 and that their early opportunities to learn are critical.)

When the youngsters are 3, they will go into a Head Start program. By the time they are 5 and enter Beethoven, they should be confident, capable and headed for success in school—and after. They also should be great assets to the school. (In classrooms where several youngsters are unable to handle the work, teachers must devote so much time to them that the entire class is slowed down.)

Not only is the Beethoven Project based on solid knowledge about early mental development, but it also is being set up with a maximum of community support and planning. Area residents and community organizations are involved in designing it and will contribute a variety of services. Robert Taylor residents will be hired and trained as home visitors and for other jobs so that their child development skills will remain in the community even after the project ends, according to director Gina Barclay-McLaughlin.

Sponsors of the project are the Ounce of Prevention program and the Chicago Urban League. Funding is coming from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Chicago-based Harris Foundation. The Illinois Departments of Children and Family Services and Public Aid also are involved.

The more sound research that's done on child development, the clearer it becomes that children can be marked for life-long failure and problems as early as the first years of life. School failure and drop-out, delinquency, unemployment, teen pregnancy and welfare dependency can often be traced to failure to succeed in the earliest years of school.

The use of new knowledge about how children's minds grow and how competency develops may avert much of this tragic sequence. Projects like this well may be the most successful, most benign—and most cost-effective—way possible to break the chains that lock people into an underclass of poverty and dependency.

The New York Times

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# Head Start on Head Start

Nothing should count higher in a society than the care of its children, yet in the United States children have become a neglected constituency, comprising 40 percent of the poor. Head Start, one of the jewels of the Great Society, has proven that high-quality early childhood education for the disadvantaged produces youngsters much more likely to finish high school, hold a job and avoid welfare and crime. But for many disadvantaged children, even Head Start comes too late.

Imagine then a head start on Head Start. That's the aim of the startling Center for Successful Child Development in Chicago, a program under way now, even before its participants are born, to prepare the kindergarten class that will enter the Beethoven Elementary School in 1993. It's a spectacular innovation, one worth national attention and, quite possibly, duplication.

The program, known as the Beethoven Project, is located in a grim neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. It's concentrated in 6 of the 28 buildings that make up the Robert Taylor Homes, the largest public housing complex in the country. The 20,000 residents of the complex are mostly black, mostly under the age of 25 and walled off from the rest of the city by an expressway.

One community leader calls the project a "breeding ground of despair" manifested in infant mortality, teen-age pregnancy and illiteracy. Concern for the educational failures impelled Irving Harris, a Chicago businessman and philanthropist, to donate $600,000 to start the Beethoven Project, with a matching grant from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services. The idea is to enlist about 125 to 150 expectant mothers and help them get their children off to the right start with comprehensive prenatal and infant care.

Much of the assistance will come from home visitors, women who live in the complex or in neighboring communities, to point the way to health care, family counseling and other needed services. They will serve as mentors to the young mothers, teaching fundamentals of parenting and nurturing, building self-esteem for the young mothers and their children. Additional support will come from a community "drop-in" center. In the process, the home visitors may also escape their own dependency.

"The overarching goal of the program is school success," says Gina Barclay McLaughlin, a psychologist who directs the Beethoven Project. "Infant and child development and community development are all part of the process." An essential precondition is community acceptance. The Chicago Urban League and the Ounce of Prevention Fund, which helps teen-age mothers and their children, have joined in sponsorship of the project.

Gov. James Thompson of Illinois put the challenge exactly right yesterday as he was inaugurated for his fourth term: "If we lose the child, we lose the adult — to mental hospitals, penitentiaries, crime, poverty and ignorance." The children, many of them, can be saved, and not only in Chicago. The Beethoven Project offers lessons, in life, for all urban America.

Chicago Sun-Times
JANUARY 4, 1987
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# 'Beethoven' aims to break poverty cycle

By Leslie Baldacci

The hopes of a community and the futures of a school full of children are riding on an experimental program taking shape at Robert Taylor Homes.

The program's goal, says its philanthropist and cosponsor, Irving Harris, is to "break the cycle of poverty" by giving babies and preschoolers the kind of nurturing and stimulation that will best prepare them for school.

Project Beethoven, as it is informally called, will provide prenatal care to the mothers of the estimated 150 babies born in this and succeeding years in six buildings of the 28 buildings at Robert Taylor. The mothers will learn how to give their babies the best nutrition to grow, the desire to learn and the tools to help them develop socially and psychologically.

When the first batch of youngsters walks through the door of Ludwig von Beethoven Elementary School, 25 W. 47th, on the first day of kindergarden in 1991, according to the project's theory, they should be up to the challenge ahead, not bewildered and disillusioned.

"The difficulty in our underclass is that they are not able to take advantage of the educational system," said Harris. "Teachers I've talked to said 30 percent of the kids in Chicago schools are not ready to go to kindergarten. . . . They are behind in language development. They just can't make it."

"Children are born ready to learn," said Gina Barclay McLaughlin, director of the Beethoven Project. "But maybe others are not prepared for it. And if others are not prepared to handle the responsibility, that kid may not be able to function in a normal way."

Judith Musick, executive director of Ounce of Prevention Fund, a public-private partnership supported by Harris, said the Beethoven Project "draws on what we've learned in the past five years in our 40 programs all over Illinois."

SUN-TIMES/Rich Hein

**Gina Barclay McLaughlin, director of the Beethoven Project, says that "children are born ready to learn."**

"The Beethoven Project takes the best of what we've learned and puts it all in a very concentrated program we are running ourselves," she said.

"This is not training to be perfect little students or concentrating on physical things," Musick said. "It is a whole way of looking at a child as a physical, social, psychological, intellectual being. So when he walks in the door at Beethoven we expect him to be competent in the fullest sense of the word—able to learn, think well, communicate well, get along with others well.

"A lot of kids who've gotten off to a bad start have lots of potential, but have social or emotional problems that keep them from making use of the potential they have. So we expect not only will they be able to learn what kindergarten and first grade has to offer, curriculum wise, but be able to use

Turn to Page 22

SUN-TIMES/Rich Hein

Francetta Cage (left to right), Bobbie Burke, Eddie Van, Phyllis Holmes, Alma Gardner and Sheila Morris pause on a playground at the Robert Taylor Homes. They are training to be home visitors.

# 'Beethoven' aims at poverty cycle

Continued from Page 5

it. They will have learned to learn."

The Beethoven Project is sponsored by Ounce of Prevention Fund and the Urban League. Ounce of Prevention receives funding from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Service and the Pittway Corp. Charitable Foundation, of which Harris is chairman.

A key to its success is community involvement. Already, six Taylor residents, all former welfare mothers, are training to be home visitors who will keep track of pregnant women, mothers and children and provide basic medical care.For this they will earn $9,500 a year, about a third more than they received on public aid.

The Illinois Public Aid Department is funding training of another 25 Taylor residents to be child-care workers and teacher assistants on the project. The U.S. Health and Human Services Department is matching Harris' $600,000, three-year committment.

The workers will be needed to take care of the children when teen mothers go back to school.

"It is so comprehensive and so intense," McLaughlin said. "Its prenatal focus with such a large group in a real challenging community and the longitudinal impact make it real attractive. The community leadership in the project make it unique."

Viewing poverty as a "real complicated situation," she said, the project "looks at it on all levels of impact."

It's still early. The home visitors are still in training, community workers are putting out the word to mothers-to-be. Architects are starting work on a space in one of the Taylor buildings at 4848 S. State to house the Center for Successful Child Development, the official name of the Beethoven Project. The money for the $100,000 renovation project isn't all raised yet, McLaughlin said.

But already, the commitment is firmly established.

"We want to make sure every resource is available," she said. "We believe it's going to pay off in the end. This is what children deserve. This is their natural right. We are committed."

Looking down the road, Harris said he believes giving children a good start in the educational system will later attack problems of high school dropouts, teen pregnancies, crime and poverty.

"To attack any of those problems, you have to start with children," Harris said. The reason children fail in school, he said, is "because they were so far behind when they started."

Chicago Sun-Times
25c CITY, SUBURBS 35c ELSEWHERE FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 1987

# Commentary

## 'Beethoven' score looks promising

In the midst of all the bad things being said about the Robert Taylor Homes, people also should be aware of something good happening in that South Side public housing complex.

It's an experimental program, now taking shape, designed to prepare children from the time they are still in the womb and through their infant and toddler years for school and for life. The program, called Project Beethoven after the elementary school the children will attend beginning in 1991, may be one of best hopes around for breaking the cycle of poverty.

The program recognizes that children will be unprepared for school and life unless their parents know how to prepare them. So the mothers of the estimated 150 babies born in this and succeeding years in six Taylor buildings will be taught how to give their children the tools they need to succeed, from nutritious diets and learning skills to a desire to achieve.

Growing evidence supports the idea that this kind of intervention in a child's early years, when the potential for learning is high, is a promising way to break the poverty cycle. A recent study in Missouri, for example, shows that preparing parents to provide a learning environment in the home for their children from infancy through age 3 results in significant increases in the childrens' intelligence scores.

Among the beautiful things about the program is the involvement of the Taylor residents. Six residents, all former welfare mothers, are being trained to be home visitors. Another 25 residents will be child-care workers and teacher assistants.

Another is the mix of public and private support the project is receiving. It is sponsored by Ounce of Prevention Fund and the Urban League. The former receives funding from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the Pittway Corp. Charitable Foundation. Funding also is coming from the Illinois Public Aid Department and the U.S. Health and Human Services Department.

We hope community and government funding institutions watch this project closely as it gets under way and are ready to provide any additional, needed support. And we hope the same institutions are around in several years to expand the program to other areas if the program proves successful, as we expect it will.

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1986

# A Cradle-to-Kindergarten Aid Plan in Chicago

By KATHLEEN TELTSCH
Special to The New York Times

CHICAGO — Victoria Barton looks younger than 17 years old as she crosses a deserted playground on Chicago's South Side.

She seems small and vulnerable against the bleak backdrop of high-rise buildings of the Robert Taylor Homes, the world's largest public housing project, where 20,000 residents, virtually all black, live in concentrated poverty.

Her first child is expected in February. The unmarried teen-ager, who lives in the project with her mother and some of her nine sisters and brothers, admits she is worried about feeding and caring for an infant. But she is comforted now, knowing that her child, even before birth, is eligible for an innovative program of benefits and services for all babies born next year in 6 of the 28 Taylor houses. About 125 to 150 children are expected to qualify. Most will be born to unwed teen-agers.

The program will supply intensive and comprehensive support to the children from birth to the age of 5 so they can enter kindergarten together at nearby Beethoven Elementary School in 1993 prepared to succeed.

The program, known informally as the Beethoven Project, will see to it that expectant mothers receive prenatal care so their children escape the social and medical costs of low birth weight. The project will also try to overcome problems with poor nurturing, teaching the mothers the skills of mothering as well as providing counseling and encouragement to help them stay in school and to get job training.

Some of that support will come from community members, including a

Continued on Page 14, Column 1

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The New York Times/Dave Kapus

Gina Barclay McLaughlin, second from left, director of the Beethoven Project. With her are, from left: Haroldine Beverly, the Urban League's director of community liaison; Cecilia Bowie, associate director of the project, and Cheryl Stampley, the project's social services director.

# A Cradle-to-Kindergarten Aid Program in Chicag

Continued From Page 1

Community Advisory Council that is already involved in helping to shape the program. There is also an older group of welfare mothers who are working to identify women eligible for the project. Later they will visit the homes of the first-time mothers to provide advice and friendship.

Gina Barclay McLaughlin, an educational psychologist who is director of the Beethoven Project, said she and her staff were confident that the program's offer of care and other benefits would not encourage a surge of new pregnancies.

"We already know when people feel good about themselves they make responsible decisions," she said.

Judith Steinhagen, principal of DuSable High School, the school attended by most of the teen-agers in the Taylor Homes, at least until many of the girls become pregnant and drop out, said, "The Beethoven Project is a Marshall Plan for preschoolers."

The undertaking, financed by an unusual mix of government and private financing, is largely the inspiration of Irving B. Harris, a Chicago businessman who has poured $20 million into other philanthropic projects, mainly efforts to help children and prevent teen-age pregnancies and haphazard child rearing. Beethoven's home visitors casually refer to "Irving Harris babies." Another group of 100 to 150 babies born in the same buildings will be added in 1988 and again in 1989.

Mr. Harris has committed a total of $600,000 for the next three years, matching a $600,000 grant from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services. State and city agencies have provided other help. Mr. Harris has also made a commitment to take care of costs in the program's fourth and fifth years.

The Beethoven Project is underpinned by a range of social agencies that Mr. Harris established over the years, whose economic contributions to the program cannot be easily measured. It also builds on his personal ties to prominent child development specialists and to government officials, one of them Gregory L. Coler, director of the Illinois Department of Public Aid.

Mr. Coler, who is 42, and Mr. Harris, who is 78, frequently talk about the partnership of "the older lion of industry who hooked up with the young bureaucrat." But underlying the jest is a shared commitment to save children from the ravages of poverty, which Mr. Coler says means "not waiting until an arm is broken or a kid scalded."

Five years ago, when Mr. Coler was head of Illinois' Department of Children and Family Services, and Mr. Harris chairman of the Pittway Corporation, they jointly created the Ounce of Prevention Fund to work on family problems that can lead to child abuse and neglect. The fund operates the Beethoven Project with help from the Chicago Urban League.

"Too many social services deal with the toe, the elbow or the ear," said Mr. Coler. "Beethoven is unusual because it deals with kids not yet born and provides services for mothers greatly at risk and because it works within the community using community people. If the experiment works, it should be no problem taking the results and mainlining them into the policy engine of the state."

Mr. Harris chooses his words carefully in assessing the program, whose evolution is being watched by officials in other cities, including Mayor Donald Fraser of Minneapolis.

"There isn't anything new in Beethoven in terms of kinds of services families will receive," Mr. Harris says. "What is new is providing comprehensive care to such a large group over a five-year period." The justification is obvious, he adds.

"Forty-five percent of the children born each year in Chicago grow up at high risk of being functionally illiterate at age 18, physically sub par, with no job skills and doomed to poverty," Mr. Harris said. "Eventually they will get picked up in the welfare system or criminal justice system or some other system. I estimate each such failure costs our society an average of $10,0 a year."

### Mayor Hails the Project

Chicago's Mayor, Harold Washington, calls the program a "great idea" in an effort to avoid the social, psychological and physiological disfunction that prevails in depressed areas."

Wynette Frazier, a member of the Community Advisory Council who directs a consortium of 23 social service agencies, acknowledges having early doubts about the venture.

"The black community has been studied to death," she said, "and the result of spending half a million dollars to tell us what we already know. And that has not prevented teen-age pregnancy or low birth weight babies or lifted the self-esteem of teen-agers who would rather stay in bed than get on with their lives. Here's a program that has been brought to the heart of the community. It creates some jobs. It allows the community council to help give directions and so, of course, people embraced it."

### Some Operations Under Way

Beethoven's organizers are still putting in place the pieces of their pro

gram, but some operations are under way.

Recently the Chicago Housing Authority signed an agreement to provide an entire vacant floor of a Robert Taylor building to be used as a center where children and their mothers can drop in for advice and obtain health and day care services.

The facility will be the hub of the Center for Successful Child Development, as the Beethoven Project is formally named.

But first it will require renovations costing $100,000.

The first time Mrs. McLaughlin, the project's director, saw the vandalized premises on a bitterly cold day, workers had to use crowbars to pry open the door. There were holes in the cinder-block walls, piles of refuse on the floors and the stench of urine.

"Dream with me," she told her small staff. "I see painted walls, plants, classrooms where we will teach nutrition, and a library. I want this to be a living space for all generations, grandparents, mothers and children. We'll involve the fathers too or die trying."

### An Enthusiastic Staff

At times the enthusiasm of the staff members is heady. "We want to create a place that will not be an institution but more like a home," said Cecilia Bowie, a child development specialist who is associate director of the Beethoven Project.

"We'll have coffee perking all the time," said Haroldine Beverly, the Urban League's director of community liaison. The center is modeled on another Harris-supported venture called Family Focus, which operates seven such centers to serve poor families in Chicago inner-city neighborhoods.

The Community Advisory Council, a key element, has met four times. Council members, especially those living in the neighborhood, will assess the program and informally supply feedback on its performance to the staff.

Meanwhile, Beethoven's staff organizers have been focusing on training six residents of the Taylor houses, all of them welfare recipients, who will make home visits to the apartments where the young mothers live, help them prepare for their babies and later watch the progress of the infants. For this, they will earn $9,500 a year.

### Training Also Under Way

Cheryl Stampley, a nurse and Beethoven's social services director, is teaching the six to recognize symptoms of ill health and to report their findings to the project's administrators. Writing reports is the hardest lesson, she says. Not only the babies but also entire families will reap benefits: if older children are found to need counseling or tutoring, they will get it.

The six are also canvassing the community for women who are pregnant, asking them to fill out a questionnaire and offering as an inducement a $50 gift certificate to a fast-food chain to those who respond. The detailed information will provide a valuable data base for researchers, including Dr. Sidney Hanes, a clinical researcher at the University of Chicago who will evaluate the program.

Because the Taylor Houses have been a site of recurrent muggings, the six are warned to make their rounds in pairs. Some climb the stairs rather than use the elevators, where women have been attacked. They are also told not to venture into inner rooms when in strange apartments and not to let furniture block their access to the door in case they have to leave quickly.

Sheila Morris, one of the six home visitors, lives with her mother, three sons, a stepdaughter and the children's unemployed father. The two-bedroom apartment is small and crowded but efforts have been made to make the living room homelike, with discovered furniture, pictures and plants.

Miss Morris, who is 29 and the youngest of 12 children, has lived in the Taylor Houses for 25 years. As she hugs her small stepdaughter, she talks of wanting her own place, saying, "I laid down to have my children; I want to raise them myself."

The Taylor Houses were opened in 1968, a compound of apartment buildings isolated from Chicago by a bordering expressway. Even then, many regarded them as an effort to segregate the poor black community, according to Barbara Bowman, a specialist in educating minority children at the Erikson Institute, another Harris-supported organization. The 16-story structures built for low-income tenants were named for her late father, a civic-minded leader of the Chicago Housing Authority, but she says he would have abhorred the housing development.

Within a few years, the high-rise buildings deteriorated, becoming what James W. Compton, the Urban League's president, calls a "breeding ground of despair." Still, tenants say, they get "good heat" and there is a long waiting list for apartments.

In this environment, organizers of the Beethoven Project acknowledge that there are obvious risks in mounting a program whose success depends on involvement of residents.

Although she refers to the project lightly as "Super-Ounce," Dr. Judith Jedrick, executive director of the Ounce of Prevention Fund, says she is troubled that there will be inadequate time to prepare the six home visitors adequately. "They will have to hit the ground running," she said.

"You go into the project, knock on a door and if the mother is not interested, you come away and figure out how to induce her to cooperate," said Dr. Modick. "Maybe you suggest an evening of cosmetic demonstrations, a pizza night or a talk about their legal rights to welfare or medical care." Even so, Mrs. Bowman predicts they will not reach the families with the worst problems.

One of those whose life has already been changed is Victoria Barton, among the first to sign up for the program, who says, "I'm happy I live here."

"I'm not worried now because people will be doing things to help me and teach me what I don't know about nutrition so I have a healthy baby," she said. She talks animatedly about going back to DuSable High School and then finding a good job.

"And we'll help you do all of that," promised Mrs. McLaughlin.

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Victoria Barton, 17 years old, at a playground near her apartment in Chicago. Ms. Barton, who is expecting her first child in February, is a beneficiary of the Beethoven Project, which helps mothers with prenatal care.